PARISH CHURCHES IN THE YEAR 1548.

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In preparing for this meeting a concise description of the arrangements and ornaments of a mediæval English parish church, it has seemed to me that it would add to the interest of the subject if special note were made of the state of things in one particular year. I have, therefore, chosen the year 1548, which subsequent events made the most important during the vaguely defined period which we call the Reformation. That period was one of rapid and often violent innovation, and to understand rightly how matters stood at any given date it is necessary to distinguish carefully between changes which had already taken place, and others which were not made till later. I do not intend to discuss now how far particular changes had constitutional authority. Some no doubt had it, and some as certainly had not; others, again, illegal at the time, were afterwards accepted and allowed; whilst, such was the confusion of the times, that of not a few changes, it is really difficult to say whether they were lawfully made or not. But our present enquiry is, what was the condition of the churches? not by whose authority they came to be such as they were.

The first step is to ascertain what services were in use in 1548. The first Prayer Book of Edward VI. did not receive the authority of Parliament till January 21st, 1549,[2] at which time it certainly was not published, even if it were printed. It, therefore, could not possibly have been in use in 1548, so we must seek for something earlier. Now towards the end of 1547 an act was passed (1st Edward VI., cap. 1) ordering the communion to be given in both kinds, and in accordance with this, there

[1] Read in the Section of Antiquities, at the Northampton Meeting, Aug. 5th, 1878.

[2] Its use was not compulsory until the Whitsun-day following—which fell on June 9th, 1549—or till three weeks after a copy had been procured.

was shortly after put forth a book called the *Order of Communion*, which was ordered to come into use on the following Easter Day, which fell on April 1st. Whatever then is found in that book may be taken as representing, so far as it goes, the usage of the last nine months of 1548. But before examining it in detail, it will be well to enquire what other authorities exist.

Going back into the reign of Henry VIII., we find a number of Acts of Parliament relating to ecclesiastical affairs, but none of them directly bear upon matters we are now considering. The suppression of monasteries caused the destruction of many noble buildings, but made no change in secular churches. And the act (37th Henry VIII., cap. 4), which confiscated for the king's use the property of "colleges, free chapels, chantries, hospitals, fraternities, brotherhoods, guylds, stipendiary priests, and divers others," did not affect parish churches, except by taking away endowed lights, and those which most guilds were accustomed to keep up, and by taking away the use of such altars as belonged exclusively to chantries. The last would make very little difference in parish churches, for chantries in them were generally founded at public altars.[1] This act did not forbid the endowment of new lights and chantries. Indeed, it seems that such were founded, for another act three years later (1st Edward VI., cap. 14), confirming the first, specially mentions endowments made since it was passed.[2]

For the last ten or twelve years of the reign of Henry VIII, there had been a quick succession of orders and injunctions by all kinds of authority, some pushing forward innovation, and others holding strongly to the old state of things. But fortunately we are saved the trouble of analysing these by the injunctions put forth in 1547 by the Privy Council in the name of the king, which seem to have had indirectly the authority of Parliament,[3] but

[1] There seems to be some confusion, even amongst antiquaries, as to the meaning of the word *chantry*. It may, therefore, be well to explain that a chantry is an ecclesiastical foundation, and not a piece of architecture. It is a foundation for the maintenance of certain services at a certain place, which place might or might not be provided for the purpose. In parish churches they were generally founded at existing altars —sometimes at the high altars; and there might be more than one at the same altar.

[2] The injunctions of 1547 say that the endowments of guilds and lights are to go to the poor's box. So that there must then have been some unconfiscated.

[3] By Act 31st Henry VIII, c. 8.

apparently not of Convocation. They are a sort of re-edition of a set of injunctions issued by Cromwell in 1536, in his character of "king's vicar-general *in rebus ecclesiasticis*," and they contain very little which had not appeared before in one form or other. They may be taken as representing the extreme departure from ancient customs, which was considered lawful at the date of their issue. That they must not be interpreted to mean more than they express, we are warned by a proclamation in February 1548, against "all that do innovate, alter, or leave down any rite or ceremony in the church of their private authority." The same proclamation, however, prepared the way for further alterations, by authorising Cranmer to make them simply on his own authority. This, I need scarcely say, was quite unconstitutional. But even earlier than this Cranmer had been acting as if he possessed irresponsible power.

The injunctions of 1547 seem generally to have been accepted and obeyed, although not without protest in some cases. The chief provisions which affect the church fabrics and ornaments are, that such images as the curates of churches know to have been abused by pilgrimages or offerings, or which shall be censed to, shall be taken away and destroyed, but only by the curates or by their authority; not by private persons. That no torches nor candles, tapers, or images of wax, be set before any image or picture, "but only two lights upon the high altar before the Sacrament, which, for the signification that Christ is the very true light of the world, they shall suffer to remain still." I shall shortly have to examine into the meaning of this, but now go on with the injunctions. It was ordered that images which had not been abused should remain, but men were to be taught that they served "for a remembrance only." The English Bible and the paraphrases of Erasmus on the Gospels were to be set up in every church where the parishioners could have access to them. All shrines and ornaments connected with them were to be taken away; the destruction of relics which had begun in 1538 was by this time tolerably complete. All pictures and other "monuments" of feigned miracles, whether in walls, glass, or elsewhere, were now to be destroyed.[1] A pulpit was to be provided

[1] This order was to apply to private houses as well as churches.

if the church had not one already, and an alms chest to be set up near the high altar.

In the same injunctions we may note the gradual introduction of the English language into the public services. The gospel and epistle at High Mass were to be read in English, and a chapter from the New Testament after the lessons at Matins, and after *Magnificat* at Evensong. The English litany was to be sung before High Mass. The Pater Noster, Creed and Ten Commandments were sometimes to be publicly rehearsed in English, and when people came to shrift in Lent they were to be asked whether they knew them, and. if they did not, Communion was to be refused. All *laudable ceremonies* of the Church not yet abrogated were to be observed.[1] Certain superstitious usages connected with holy water, holy bread, and holy candles, were checked, but the things themselves were retained.

We find then that the changes which had been made up to the beginning of the year 1548, although important, were not such as to produce much visible alteration in parish churches or in the public services. The old Latin service books were still in use only modified by the omission of some holydays, especially the feasts of St. Thomas of Canterbury, of whom Henry VIII had made a sort of personal enemy, and by the erasure of passages which seemed to acknowledge the authority of the Bishop of Rome,[2] and of rubrics about indulgences. And

[1] How much was covered by this, we may learn from the *Book of Ceremonies* put forth by the Convocation for the province of Canterbury in 1539. It is a sort of explanation and commentary on the ceremonies then in use, and includes all the ancient details of the Mass and other daily services, the vesture and tonsure of the clergy, the bearing of candles on Candlemas-day, the giving of ashes, the covering of the cross and images in Lent, the bearing of palms on Palm Sunday, the services of the three last days of Holy Week, the hallowing of oil and chrism, the washing of altars, the hallowing of the font on Easter Even, the ceremonies of the resurrection on Easter morning, general and particular processions, holy water, and holy bread. Of most of these, the same epithet as in the *injunctions* is used, and they are said to be *very laudable*. And it does not appear that till 1549 any of them were interfered with, either by lawful authority, or by any authority strong enough to enforce general obedience without question of right. Cranmer and his party were in 1548 trying to put down usages connected with certain days, such as the giving of ashes and the bearing of palms, and the ceremonies of Holy Week, but so far they appear not to have effected much except where their immediate influence was powerful. They had not yet ventured to attack the ordinary daily services.

[2] These alterations were ordered by the Convocation for the province of Canterbury in 1541. In April, 1876, I had the pleasure of exhibiting to the Royal Archaeological Institute, a MS. grayle of Salisbury use, in which some of them may be seen (v. *Journal*, vol. xxxiii, p. 297). It seems not generally to be remembered that the English church after

the celebration of public worship was still surrounded by all its ancient accessories.

Such was the state of things when the *Order of Communion* was put forth in March, 1548. That book as its name implies is an order for *Communion* only, not for the *celebration* of the Holy mysteries. It consists of an address giving notice of the Communion, and exhorting to due preparation for it; another at the time of Communion, beginning, *Dearly beloved in the Lord, Ye coming to this Holy Communion must consider what Saint Paul, writing to the Corinthians, &c.;* the short address, *You that do truly*; the general confession and absolution; the comfortable words; the prayer of humble access; the words used in houseling the people; and the final benediction. These are all substantially the same as in our present *Book of Common Prayer*, except that the words on communicating the people stop in both cases at *everlasting life*, and have not the second sentence which now follows them. A rubric directs that "the time of communion shall be immediately after the priest himself hath received the Sacrament without varying of any other rite or ceremony in the Mass (until other order shall be provided), but as heretofore the priest hath done with the Sacrament of the Body to prepare, bless, and consecrate so much as will serve the people so it shall continue after the same manner and form, save that he shall bless and consecrate the biggest chalice or some fair and convenient cup or cups full of wine with some water put into it, and that day not drink it up all himself, but taking only one sup or draught, leave the rest upon the altar, covered, and turn to them that are disposed to be partakers of the communion, and shall exhort them as followeth." Here follows the exhortation and the rest.

No "further order" was provided until the issue of the *Prayer book* of 1549. We have therefore direct proof that to the end of 1548 and till Whitsunday 1549, the services and all that pertained to them continued exactly as they were at the beginning of the former year, except

having rejected the Papal authority continued to use the old service books practically unaltered for a period three times as long as was covered by both Prayer Books of Edward VI together.

that on certain days[1] when the people were to be houseled, the old Latin Mass had an English form of communion inserted. This is important for our enquiry, because, if the services continued "without varying any rite or ceremony," all objects and ornaments used in those services must have remained and been in use in the churches. The parish church of 1548 was then a late mediaeval church with some alterations which we shall note as we go along.

That the description may be as complete as possible we will suppose our church to be that of an important town parish, and I shall endeavour to distinguish between things usual and those only sometimes to be found. The principal entrance was by the south door, which has almost always a porch and in important churches generally a chamber above. In the porch was often a stock or basin for holy water, but sometimes these were inside the church either in the aisle walls or against a pillar as at Cogenhoe, Northants, or against the western responds as at Cawston church, Norfolk.[2] Mr. Bloxam in his *Ecclesiastical Architecture* mentions a few churches in Somersetshire, which have had a narrow gallery over the door inside the porch. This gallery was I think for the use of the boys who sang the *Gloria laus et honor* at the procession on Palm Sunday. When there was not a permanent gallery a temporary one was sometimes set up for this use.[3] About opposite the south door was one on the north side, and often, but by no means always, there was another at the west end. Near the west end stood the font, generally in the middle of the nave, or if not there, often against the west side of one of the pillars. This font had always a cover which could be locked down. The cover took a variety of forms which are well known. And sometimes the font had over it a canopy either of wood, as at St. Peter's, Mancroft, Nor-

[1] It is clear from the form of the rubric quoted above that the *Order of Communion* was not intended to be used at every Mass, but only at certain times when the people were expected to receive. In most churches it was probably not used more than three or four times before it was superseded.

[2] Now and then we find a holy water stock outside the church. There is an example outside the priest's door at Burford church, Oxfordshire.

[3] See Rubrics for Palm Sunday services generally. Brand (*Pop. Ant.*, i, 130) quotes churchwardens' accounts of St. Mary at Hill, London, for 1531, "For settyng up the frame over the porch on Palme Sunday eve, 6d."

wich, or of stone, as at Luton church, Beds. Near it was often a locker in which were kept the oils, salt, and other things required in the old baptismal service, Amongst them was an ewer and basin for the sponsors to wash their hands after a baptism.[1]

When the tower stood at the west end, it sometimes had a gallery in it, and I have heard this called the *plough loft*. There is one at Cawston Church, Norfolk, with an inscription on the front, unfortunately too much decayed to be entirely legible, but beginning quaintly *God spede the plow and send us ale corn anow*, and mentioning the *plow lite of Sygate*; Sygate being a hamlet in the parish. In the hand-rail of the loft are holes which may have held pricks for tapers. Margaret Paston,[2] in 1484, amongst other ecclesiastical legacies left fourpence to a plough light, and such bequests are not uncommon. The lights would have been removed before 1548. I suppose they belonged to some agricultural gild, but it is possible that they were something more. Our ancestors had many strange and more than half pagan customs connected with their agriculture, and the subject is worth further enquiry.[3]

At Heckington, Lincolnshire, and Harlstone, Northamptonshire, are west galleries of another sort. They are narrow and high up above the tower arches. Neither is the original loft, the first being a barbarous modern Gothic affair, and the other a work of the seventeenth century; but the approaches to both are ancient. That at Heckington has fourteenth century doors in the clerestory walls, opening on to the leads of the aisle roofs; and the Harlstone example is reached by a stone stair from the north aisle of the nave, and has also had a door from the tower.

[1] "Itm: I bequethe to the chyrche of Seynt Jamys a basen and a ewer of pewter hamered to be vsyd at crystnyng of chyldern in the seyd chyrch as long as it will indure."—Will of Agas Herte of Bury 1522, printed in *Bury Wills and Inventories* p. 116. The instructions to be given by the priest to the sponsors after a baptism always end with an order to wash their hands before leaving the church. This was out of reverence to the chrism which they had touched in lifting the child from the font.

[2] *Paston Letters*, vol. iii, p. 462. The strange word *Aratrab'm* which Mr. Gairdner queries ought certainly to be *Aratrorum*.

[3] In the Ripon Treasurer's Roll for 1401-2 is found, "*It. in* xij *lib. de Rosyne empt. (tam) pro expensis infra chorum quam pro distribucione carucarum in die Epiphanie Domini* xijd." What does this mean? I owe the passage to a transcript of the roll made by the Rev. J. T. Fowler, F.S.A., who I hope will some day edit the Ripon Rolls, as a companion volume to the Chapter Acts, already edited by him for the Surtees Society.

These are probably music galleries, and the chief use of the larger gallery inside the tower was probably the same.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century all but very poor parish churches seem to have been furnished with pews,[1] but the whole area was not filled with them, as at a later date. Old pews west of the doors are very rare, but they are found sometimes, as at Brington, Northants. Generally all this space was left clear, and there was a clear area of at least one bay, and often much more at the west end. A church with aisles had nearly always four blocks of pews, and the passages were broad alleys, that in the middle being often more than a third of the width of the nave, and the side passages were not much less. The appropriation of special places to individuals seems to have been usual,[2] and even that bugbear of modern ecclesiastical reformers, the lock-up pew or closet, was not unknown. These in parish churches were generally chantry chapels, arranged for private services at their own altars and for use as pews during the public services. There is a curious and interesting example at Burford Church, Oxfordshire, in the north-east arch of the nave. It has a little stone reredos over its altar,[3] and cut through the reredos is a squint towards the high altar. There is another at Shelsley Walsh, Worcestershire, fitted to the rood screen in an aisleless church. The little parish church of Holme

[1] The earliest pews I have seen are at Dunsfold, Surrey, where they appear to be contemporary with the nave, which is of the end of the thirteenth century. But in 1287 we find pews mentioned as things usual in the acts of a Synod of Exeter, which decreed that to prevent disputes about places they should for the future not be appropriated, but free to the first comers.—WILKINS' *Concilia*, ii, p. 129, &c.

[2] The ends of pews have sometimes inscriptions, or coats of arms, or personal badges, which tell of their original occupiers. Examples remain at Sandal Magna, Yorkshire, and Brington, Northamptonshire. Langland, at the end of the fourteenth century, describes Envy as "yparroked in puwes among wyves and wodewes" (Text C, pass. vii, l. 144). And from other passages it appears that the appropriation was at first chiefly to women.

[3] This altar has been restored, and is now in regular use, but, unfortunately the sides of the "closet" have been lowered, so as to make them into a sort of altar rail, which has quite destroyed the character of the chapel. An interesting series of closets remains between the choir and the Beauchamp Chapel at Warwick. There is a passage which shews us the closet in use in a letter from Agnes Paston, wherein she describes a scene in Paston church in 1451. Mr. Gairdner in his excellent edition of the *Paston Letters* (vol. i, p. 219) has quite misunderstood it, being led astray by the word *parklos*, which he has strangely taken to mean a park paling. The use of screened off chapels as pews continued after their altars had been destroyed, and new ones of the same type were set up, so that we sometimes find enclosures resembling the chantry chapels, but with the screens of Elizabeth's time, or later.

near Newark has a chapel south of the chancel, and nearly as large as it. This retains its fittings of the sixteenth century, arranged so as to suit worshippers at either altar. I believe that the greater number of the squints to be found in old churches have been for the gratification of private pewholders.[1]

The ordinary pews were sometimes benches without backs, as at Reepham, Norfolk, and many churches in that neighbourhood. But oftener they had backs. They were widely spaced and had large bookboards.

The Injunctions of 1547 ordered a pulpit to be provided where there was not one before. I have not met with one which might be thought to have been provided in consequence of that order, unless, perhaps, it be the very pretty Renaissance example which used to be at Rotherham before the church was restored, and perhaps is there yet. Somewhat earlier ones are occasionally found. There seems to have been no fixed position for them, and perhaps they were often made moveable, like one of the beginning of the sixteenth century which remains at Westminster Abbey. One at Sall Church, Norfolk, stands against the middle pillar of the nave on the south side, and it appears to occupy its original site. It is a small hexagonal tub standing on a stem, which is a very usual form. There is another at Cawston, the next parish; it is on the north side, at the second pillar from the east, but this is not certainly its old site.

At Walpole St. Peter, Norfolk, the pulpit has stood on a large stone bracket on the north side of the chancel arch, and was reached from the rood stair; and at Walpole St. Andrew was a similar arrangement on the south side. At Sleaford, Lincolnshire, was a large projection in the middle of the rood loft, which may have been intended for the pulpit. The canopy or sounding board was used, and probably common.

Whether the litany desk was in use so early as 1548 is, I think, very doubtful. It was ordered in 1547 that immediately before High Mass the priests and others of the quire should kneel in the midst of the church and

[1] Most of the rest were for the convenience of those engaged in the service. For instance, there is often a squint from the sacristy towards the high altar, so that clerks who had to go into the sacristy during the service might follow it there, and know when to return to the church.

sing or say plainly and distinctly the Litany. It was in fact in a new form the station before the rood of the old procession. And we sometimes find contemporary writers speak of the new litany as the *English procession*.

Another possible object in this part of the church might be the confessional. Under the name of the *Shreyng pew* we find it mentioned at the beginning of the sixteenth century in the accounts of the parish of St. Margaret Pattens,[1] and as *Shriving house* at St. Christopher at Stock 1523.[2] The thing then did exist in some places. But both these examples are late and from London, where a new fashion was likely to appear first, and I think that this was a new fashion then lately introduced, and that it was not allowed time to spread very far. The old custom was for the penitent simply to kneel or stand by the side of the priest, who sat in an ordinary chair. We are indeed shewn in many churches things which are called confessionals, for in the archæology of a verger or a sexton anything with a hole in it is a confessional, but I never saw anything which really looked at all like one, not even that strange closet at Tanfield, which, whatever it may be, is certainly not a confessional.

Somewhere in the nave, or at least in some part of the church to which the parishioners had free access, must have been the desk on which were laid the great Bible and the *Paraphrases* of Erasmus on the Gospels, which were ordered by the injunctions to be provided, and which it appears generally were provided. These were not for public use, but for the private reading of the people; although the English lessons would be not unlikely to be read from the great Bible, as most churches would possess only one copy. The custom of setting books in churches for common use was not a new one. They were sometimes left by will for that purpose, and were chained to desks in any convenient place in the church. The usage was general in the seventeenth century, and chained books of that date are not uncom-

[1] Printed in the *Sacristy*, i, 258.

[2] See a paper by Mr. Edmund Freshfield, F.S.A., in the forty-fifth volume of the *Archæologia*. The inventory for 1488, which Mr. Freshfield prints at length, is remarkably full, and gives a most perfect picture of the church and its furniture. I shall quote it freely further on.

mon in old churches. Even so late as the second decade of the present century Prebendary Roberson set up the Book of Homilies for public use in the remarkable church[1] which he built at Liversedge near Leeds, and I am told that there is one later still in a church at Ripon.

Between the nave and the chancel stood the rood screen, which, in the sixteenth century, even in small churches, generally carried a loft. This loft was really a music gallery, and its general introduction seems to have been due to the increase of the use of choral services in parish churches. To a certain extent it took the place of the *pulpitum* of a choir, but it was not exactly the same thing; and I think it was never used for the singing of the Gospel and Epistles, which was the original purpose of the other.[2] The organ, if there was one—and at the time we are speaking of it seems to have been common—generally stood in the rood loft. It was but a small affair. The loft would contain a few desks for singers; and along the handrail were basons and pricks for tapers. These were so much a recognised part of its furniture, that in Norfolk and Suffolk the popular name for the whole loft was the *Candlebeam*. St. Christopher at Stock had "longyng to the rode loft xxx Bolles of Laton."

Either from the loft itself, or from a beam above it, rose the great cross or rood, with or without attendant images, and it had been usual to keep at least one lamp constantly burning before it. The injunctions of 1536, which took away many lights, specially retained "the light that commonly goeth a crosse the church by the rode loft." But as this exception is not repeated in 1547 we must suppose it to have then been taken away.

The screen generally, and the loft sometimes, extended across the aisles, as well as the nave. This was the case at St. Mary's Church, Bury St. Edmunds,

[1] This is a large and lofty building in very fair Gothic for the time. It has aisles and clerestory. There are no galleries, and all the seats face east. There is a real *bonâ fide* chancel with a high screen, not a mere recess for the altar, and at the south side of it was a curious wooden credence, which has lately been removed to the vestry. The church was consecrated, I think, in 1817, and it is difficult to say whether it represents the last of the mediæval tradition or the beginning of the revival. It has been considerably altered since it was built, but retains its chief peculiarities.

[2] Contrast the straight stairs, or wide vice (as at St. David's) of the *pulpitum* with the very narrow and steep vice, which often has to serve the rood loft. In some places, as at Campsall Church, Yorkshire, the only way into the loft seems to have been by a ladder.

where, in the gallery at the south side, there was a chime of bells, which played at certain times, and also served the purpose of the sakering bell. It was the duty of the "berere of the paxbrede" to keep them in order, "to wynde up the plomme of led as ofte as nedith, and to do the chymes goo at ye sacry of the Messe."[1]

The most important object in the chancel was, of course, the high altar. That, like all the other altars, was a simple, plain stone table,[2] standing on pillars, or on a mass of masonry. The number of altars in one church varied much, but there were generally at least three. If a church had no aisles or transepts, the two minor altars stood one on each side of the chancel arch. If there were aisles to the chancel the principal secondary altars would be in them, and if there were not, then at the east end of the aisles of the nave, or in the transepts, if there were any. Besides these, we find chapels for altars in all sorts of positions. In the nave itself, as in examples already cited; at the west end of nave aisles, as at Boston and Holbeach, and some neighbouring churches; in the chamber over a porch, as at Sall. In the little church of St. Runwald, at Colchester, which was pulled down last year, there had even been altars in the rood loft, an arrangement which is also found at Ross, in Herefordshire,[3] but is rare in a parish church, though it sometimes existed in other churches. At Colchester it seems to have been caused by the very small size of the building, which, owing to its position in the middle of the street, could not be enlarged, and in which no more floor space could be spared when it was required to erect new altars.

The altars were vested so as to have much the same appearance as those of the present day. On the top were four linen cloths called *towels*, and the front was

[1] Will of John Baret, 1463.—*Bury Wills*, p. 29.

[2] The destruction of stone altars seems to have been begun in 1550 by Ridley, then acting as Bishop of London. The act was entirely illegal, and the substitutes provided were not wood altars, or even tables, as we understand the word, but mere boards standing on trestles—oyster boards, as they were called at the time. It was clearly to prevent this irreverent arrangement that, in Elizabeth's time, when wood tables again came in, they were ordered to be *decent* and to *stand on frames*, thereby excluding trestles. So late as 1567 one John Hardyman, D.D., Prebendary of Westminster, was deprived for destroying altars and other ornaments in that church, without authority.

[3] See *Archeological Journal*, vol. xxxiv, p. 500.

covered with a frontal, generally of silk or some rich stuff, but sometimes taking the form of a tablet of wood, painted, and even covered with precious metal. Such, however, was more likely to be found in the oldest of the abbeys than in parish churches. Often, but not always, along the top of the frontal was a narrow fringed strip called a *frontlet*, and sometimes spoken of as the *apparel*[1] of a towel, which, indeed, it really was, for it did not extend over the top of the altar, which was covered with nothing but linen. These ornaments, and other such in the church, would be changed from time to time, according to the ecclesiastical seasons, but there was no such cut and dried rule as to colours, as is now often insisted upon. A sort of rule is given in the Salisbury missal, but it was not very closely obeyed, even in cathedrals, which, like parish churches, had traditions of their own, and seem to have been regulated chiefly by the ornaments which each church or altar happened to possess.[2]

Above the altar was sometimes a *table* or *reredos* of painter's or carver's work, but more often a hanging of the same suit as the frontal, and called the super frontal or upper frontal. At the ends were *riddels* or curtains hanging from iron rods, and sometimes a canopy or ceiling hung above the altar. The canopy standing on pillars—the *baldacchino* as it is now called—seems to have been scarcely known in England in the sixteenth century, but there was one standing in 1548 in the Lady Chapel at Westminster.[3] Miniatures often shew a sort of ledge or shelf along the back of the altar. The inventory of St. Christopher at Stock mentions it as the *forme uppon the high alter undre the juellis*, and about the same time at St. Mary at Hill we find *a schelfe standyng on the*

[1] I do not attempt to give all the names of these or any other things. Our ancestors were very careless about names, and not only gave many to one thing, but often used the same word with several meanings.

[2] The Rev. J. T. Fowler has sent me a curious extract from the Church books of Thame, Oxon, where the *use* of the parish seems to have been settled at a vestry meeting :—"A sute of blewe embroydered with gold, with aumteloppes and byrdes of gold, the orfraies with crockyns and sterres of gold, the which, by the consent of the parish, serveth for Whitsonday." They had another suit of blue, which was used for Trinity Sunday. The selection of blue for either of these days can only have been to fit the contents of the Thame sacristy.

[3] It stood with the altar under it till 1543, when the church was wrecked by the Puritans.

altar.[1] Holinshed,[2] in describing the chapel prepared for Henry VIII at Guisnes at the time of the Field of the Cloth of Gold in 1520, calls it *an halpas*, and again a *deske*. The former word means a step. It was what is now called the *superaltar*. The old *superaltare* was a portable consecrated altar slab, and was, I think, not generally to be found in a parish church, although it certainly was sometimes; St. Christopher at Stock had three. The high altar seems to have always had an altar cross, which was often the same as the processional cross, it being made to fit a standing foot and a shaft, and so serve both purposes. But it does not appear that the cross was considered at all a necessary ornament for a minor altar, though no doubt it was a common one; sometimes its place was certainly taken by an image. The distinction between a cross and a crucifix is modern. The old altar cross would generally have a figure of our Lord, and those of the sixteenth century also figures of Saints Mary and John on brackets at either side.

Until the removal of relics and reliquaries, the latter had been the chief *juellis* used in decking altars, and it seems that any pieces of plate were considered legitimate ornaments, as indeed they have continued to be in the traditions of our collegiate churches even to the present day. Images also, especially those of precious metal, were sometimes used. Another important ornament on the high altar was the *Textus* or book of the gospels, the cover of which was often of gold or silver, or rich embroidery. And yet another was the *paxbrede* or tablet for the kiss of peace. The missal for the celebrant was supported sometimes on a cushion, and sometimes on a small desk. I have not found evidence of the use of flowers for decking altars, but the clergy sometimes wore garlands of them.

It has generally been assumed that the injunctions of 1547 limit the lights on the altar to two. But I think this is not the case. The injunctions retain *two lights upon the high altar before the Sacrament*. Now this passage is very ambiguous, and may possibly have been

[1] Quoted by Dr. Rock, *Church of our Fathers*, i, 238. There is a stone shelf remaining behind an old altar in Grantham Church.

[2] Vol. iii, p. 857, edit. 1587.

deliberately intended to be so ; but I very much suspect that if the original document be in existence, and were examined, it would be found that it has been wrongly printed.[1] As the passage stands, it is nonsense whether we suppose it to refer to the time of celebration, or to the reserved Sacrament. For by no possible contortion of language could two lights placed *upon* the altar be said to be *before* the Sacrament, either lying in the midst of the altar or reserved by suspension above it, as was then the custom. The corresponding passage in the injunctions of 1536, which, as I have said, served throughout as the model for those of 1547, when forbidding the lights before images and pictures, retains "the light that commonly goeth across the church by the rood loft, the light before the Sacrament of the altar, and the light about the sepulchre." All this is perfectly clear, and it does not refer to lights, which were used from time to time in the services, but to lamps kept constantly burning in the church, the first two throughout the year, and the last during the latter part of Holy Week The later injunctions can, I think, only be understood in the same way, and as doing away with the light before the rood loft, but retaining that before the reserved Sacrament. Perhaps the mention of *two* lights shews an intention to move the former rood light up to the high altar as a second light there.[2] If the passage was intended to apply to celebrations, how came it that the *high* altar was specially named? for we know that minor altars continued in regular use for some time after the issue of this order.

If my supposition is correct the ancient usages as to altar lights remained unaltered in 1548 ; but these usages were by no means so uniform as seems to be generally believed. An ordination for the church of Snaith in 1285 quoted[3] by Burton sums them up conveniently so far as

[1] In all the printed copies which I have seen, and those which friends have been kind enough to examine for me, the passage stands as generally quoted. So the mistake, if there is one, has an early origin. Perhaps it comes from the first printed edition. The injunction certainly was very soon after quoted as referring to the altar lights. But considering the confusion of the times, that is far from conclusive as to the meaning it was intended and understood to bear when first put forth.

[2] Two lights before the high altar would be no novelty, for until they were taken away most churches which could afford them had more than one.

[3] *Monasticon Eboracense*, page 402. Burton unfortunately gives only a translation of the passage, and makes several obvious mistakes, but the meaning is clear as far as the lights are concerned. In the last edition of Dugdale's *Monasticon* the passage is copied without any hint at the mistakes. I have failed to trace the MS. chartulary which Burton used.

that church is concerned, and it probably ordains what was then usual in such a church. Belonging to the high altar were four candles, being almost certainly two standing on the altar and two in large standing candlesticks at the sides of it, as we know was the common custom at a later date. On double feasts two lights were carried by clerks at high Mass. To every minor altar one candle only was allowed. The use of only one light seems to have escaped the notice of most antiquaries, and yet it must have been very common. Myrc, in his *Instructions for Parish Priests*,[1] written about 1450, assumes that the country parsons for whom he wrote would generally have but one light, and he tells them that it should be placed on the north side of the altar.

> "Loke Pat Py candel of wax hyt be
> And set hyre so Pat Pow hyre see
> On Pe lyfte half of Pyn autere
> And loke algate ho brenne clere."—Ll. 1875-8.

Lyndwode (*Provinciale*, f. cxxix, Ed. 1505) quotes a constitution of Archbishop Walter Raynold—*tempore quo missarum solenniae peraguntur accendantur duae candelae vel ad minus una*—and makes no comment as to the number. According to Wilkins these constitutions belong to the year 1322. The rules of guilds which kept chaplains, and the endowments of chantries often mention only one light.

The lights were sometimes more than two. King Henry's Chapel on the Field of the Cloth of Gold had ten candlesticks of gold on the altar, being not improbably six large candlesticks of a suit and four lower ones, possibly holding more than one taper each. This is the largest number I have found named for one altar. At Chichester Cathedral we learn from the statutes[2] that at least as early as the thirteenth century the custom was to have on great festivals seven tapers of two pounds each on the altar, eight on the beam above it,[3] and two in standing candlesticks on the altar step, besides the processional lights. On minor festivals there were five lights on the altar and two on the step, and on ordinary days three on the altar and two on the step. This usage of

[1] Edited for the Early English Text Society by Mr. Edward Peacock, F.S.A.

[2] *Archæologia*, xlv, 165-6.

[3] This position would correspond with the top of the reredos in later times.

odd numbers extended to other churches in the diocese of Chichester, as appears by the three smoke stains which were found in 1862 over the site of each of the altars by the chancel-arch at Westmesten church, Sussex.[1]

The custom now general on the continent, and not uncommon amongst ourselves, of setting smaller tapers upon altars in addition to the principal ones, appears in our parish churches in the fifteenth century. In the inventory of St. Christopher at Stock we find "candel styckks[2] of a sewt to sett on smaller tapers uppon the alters," and again "iij laton candelstikks with two noses to set inne talowe candell for the alters."[3]

The ordinary altar lights were used at Matins, Mass and Evensong, and must have continued in use, according to the custom of each church, throughout the year 1548. At a somewhat earlier period the richer churches had their altars surrounded by a varying and often considerable number of lights, chiefly suspended, some of which burned continually and others were lighted at particular times. Most of these were votive or endowed lights, and as such were taken away by acts 37th Henry VIII, c. 4, and 1st Edward VI, c. 14, and of the rest the injunctions, if I am right in my interpretation of them, allowed two only to burn continually before the Sacrament reserved at the high altar. But there seems to be nothing which would have prevented the use of any such lights during particular services in places where it had been the custom of the parish to provide them. The more important altars had large standing candlesticks on the floor at each side of them, as they still have at Winchester Cathedral, Westminster Abbey and other places, and the candles in these burned at all the principal services.

It is convenient to mention here the other lights, which were kept in 1548, by the retention of the ceremonies with which they were connected. These were the two tapers carried by boys in processions at High

[1] *Sussex Archaeological Collections*, xvi.

[2] Unfortunately the number is uncertain.

[3] Candlesticks were made of all kinds of material, gold, silver, brass, copper, pewter, iron, and very often wood. The reason that in inventories often no mention is made of the altar candlesticks is probably that they were in these cases of no intrinsic value. As a rule, I think the more expensive candlesticks were not those which stood on the altar, but those carried by the *cereferarii*.

Mass, and at other services when solemnly performed; the herse light[1] used at Matins or *Tenebræ* on the last three days of Holy Week; the paschal candle,[1] which stood in a tall candlestick, or hung in a bason on the north side of the high altar, and was lighted with much ceremony on Easter Eve, and burned at all the principal services throughout Paschal tide; the torches[1] carried in the procession on Corpus Christi day; the lantern carried before the Sacrament when it was taken to the sick; the large standing tapers which were placed round a corpse during the funeral services; and the candle used at baptism. Most of the lights which a little earlier had been common round tombs were endowed, and as such had been taken away, but the custom of survivors placing lights round the graves of their departed friends would probably be continued still for a few years.

Somewhat earlier every church had had one or more images, before which lights burned, but now these had been taken away. The lights about the church were of many kinds. Hanging lights before altars and elsewhere were oil lamps or single candles in basons, or they were *branches, i.e.*, chandeliers, holding each several candles. Lights also stood on brackets of stone, wood, or metal; one form of *branch*, which had been common before images, was an ornamental arm of metal, carrying one or more basons for tapers. Metal basons also stood on the tops of screens and in many other places. Sometimes an oil lamp was placed in a small niche in the wall, with a flue to take away the smoke, and a transparent door in front of it. A niche of this sort remains in the chapel of the Red Mount, at Lynn. The lights round tombs were often tapers fixed on pricks, forming part of the iron fences which surrounded them.

The reserved Sacrament hung above the high altar in a pyx, over which was a small tent-shaped canopy. The pyx itself was covered with a pyx cloth or sudary, which was a square napkin of fine linen or silk, with a hole in

[1] All these would probably be used in 1548 in many churches, but not where court influence was strong. See note 1 at page 375. The other lights enumerated above would still be used generally, except in the few churches which had got into the hands of fanatics, who introduced "Geneva fashions," and were already openly connived at by the government, proclamations notwithstanding.

the middle, and at each corner a knop of silver or other fit material. When in use the cord supporting the pyx passed through the hole, and the four knops weighed down the cloth, so as entirely to veil it.

The ornaments used on or about the altar were the chalice[1] and paten; the burse, with two corporas cloths, one serving folded for what is now called the pall; the monstrance, used in processions of the B. Sacrament; the crewetts, for wine and water; the spoon, used to remove any accidental impurities from the wine in the chalice, when preparing it for the offertory; the two basons and napkins, used for washing the fingers of the celebrant; and other basons for collecting alms. With these may be named the censer and ship for incense; the processional cross and candlesticks; the sakering bell; the holy water bucket and sprinkle; and the tray or basket for holy bread. The sakering bell was certainly used in 1548, although the injunctions of 1547 forbade the ringing or knelling of bells during service, except before the sermon. Of the retention of holy water, holy bread, and the pax, in 1548 we have direct confirmation, in the articles of an eccentric visitation of the Deanery of Doncaster, which are printed by Wilkins.[2]

To the south side of the altar was the niche containing the water drain[3] and also serving for what is now called

[1] At a general communion, when more breads were wanted than the paten would conveniently hold, a chalice seems generally to have been used for them. And so long as communion was given only in one kind, the priest, when houseling the people, was followed by a clerk, with another chalice or cup, from which he gave drink—not necessarily wine—to each of the communicants. The large *stone* chalice, formerly amongst the English *regalia*, and called the chalice of St. Edward, was used for this purpose, and not for the celebration. It was probably like the so-called cup of Ptolemy, amongst the French crown jewels, an antique cup, with the mediæval mounting. From the cup of Ptolemy wine was given to the French queens at their coronation. The French kings communicated in both kinds.

[2] *Concilia*, vol. iv, p. 29. There is an obvious error in the passage directing the clerk to bring the pax to the *church door*. It should be *choir door* or *chancel door*. The order does not alter the ritual as it then existed, but added some explanatory addresses.

[3] At the time we are considering there seems to have been only one drain, but in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, we often find two and sometimes three to one altar. The bowls of some of the earlier ones were deep and some appear to have been fitted with lids. At Lincoln cathedral there remain several fitted with hemispherical stones completely filling them up flush with the slabs. Now and then we find evidence that the niche containing the drain, &c., has been shut up with a door. Besides the drain or drains in the wall we sometimes find one in the floor near the south side of the sanctuary. This has been a puzzle to antiquaries, and several unsatisfactory explanations have been given of it. There is however a passage in the thirtieth chapter of the fourth book of the *Rationale* of Durandus, which seems to make its use clear: *sacerdos minister missurus vinum et*

the credence ;[1] and near it by the more important altars were the seats for the clergy, being in parish churches generally three in number. Before the altars were laid carpets in the better furnished churches, and often there was a brass eagle desk on the north side to sing the gospel from. Sometimes, as at Mickleover, Derbyshire, and Chipping Warden, Northants, a stone desk in the north wall of the chancel served this purpose. At the time of communion the houseling cloth was used. This was a long cloth generally of linen but sometimes of richer stuff, which was held up by two clerks before the communicants when being houseled. Its use continued at coronations till lately, and has always been kept up at Wimborn, in Dorsetshire, where it takes the form of linen clothes laid over the low tables or benches which there take the place of altar rails.

The foregoing description applies chiefly to high altars, but in most large churches there were secondary altars furnished for sung services, and which differed little in their belongings from the high altars. The others which were intended only for low masses were furnished only for them.

The Injunctions of 1547 ordered a chest with three keys to be set near the high altar. And we sometimes find chests of that or rather a later date at the south end of the lowest step of the sanctuary.

At Easter, 1548, the old ceremonies of holy week would be observed in many places and for them the Easter sepulchre would be required.[2] In most churches it was a temporary erection set up when wanted ; but in some, especially in Lincolnshire and the neighbouring counties,

aquam in calicem prius effundit modicum, in terram. This was done to clear the spouts of the crewets of any dust which might be in them. The drain in the floor was, there can be little doubt, intended to receive what was so poured out. It is always found on the south side near the credence where the chalice used to be prepared before being offered at the altar, and never at the *base* of the altar as it should be to fit the most generally received explanation of it.

[1] Sometimes the credence and drain were not in the same niche, one or other of them being provided for elsewhere. The credence was in some cases a moveable table. There was one of brass at the altar of St. Edward at Westminster, which is named in an inventory printed by Mr. Mackenzie Walcott in the fourth volume of the transactions of the *London and Middlesex Archaeological Society.* In this case and that of many other minor altars there was possibly no drain, but a bason served. Sometimes a towel was hung over or conveniently near to the lavatory.

[2] Cranmer in some Articles of Inquiry put forth in August 1548, asks whether it had been used at the Easter last past.

it was a locker on the north side of the sanctuary, and sometimes a work of great magnificence.

Both chancel and chapels were screened off from the body of the church, and the chancels were generally furnished with a single row of stalls for the clergy. These were returned at the west end, and had high elbows and turn-up seats or *misericords*.[1] The poorer churches had plain benches, instead of the expensive stalls. In front of the stalls were desks, and sometimes in front of them were benches for the singing boys. I know of no example of desks being provided for singing boys. In the middle of the chancel stood a lectern, generally with a double desk made to turn, on which lay the Antiphoner and Grayle. The eagle desk was, I think, rarely used in this position, but belonged properly to the altar. Besides the great lectern in the middle, some churches had two or more smaller lecterns, to hold music books in front of the stalls.

Some large chapels were fitted up with stalls like chancels, but this was not common in parish churches. More usually the chapels either were without furniture, except such as belonged to the altars, or, in the case of chapels forming aisles to chancels, they were fitted up with pews, facing east, like those in the nave, either on both sides of the chapels, or only on the sides next to the chancel. These pews were looked upon as the best in the church, being those nearest to the chancel.

Chapels were the most usual places for tombs, but they are found also in every part of the church. The various forms of them are too familiar to require description, but the use of colour gave them much more decorative importance in an interior than they have now. Many were painted, and others were covered with rich cloths. Flat gravestones had often carpets laid over them, and raised tombs had palls of cloth of gold or other costly stuff. The church of Dunstable still possesses such a pall; it is of crimson velvet, richly embroidered. Tapestries and cloths of various kinds were very much used, especially in chancels, as curtains and carpets, and as coverings for

[1] The choir stalls at Walpole St. Peter, Norfolk, are stone niches, with wood misericordes.

seats and desks and the like. Every church had also special hangings for Lent, when images and pictures were covered up generally with white [1] or blue cloths, marked with crosses and the emblems of the Passion. The Lenten veil between the choir and the high altar seems also to have been retained in 1547, but in 1548 Cranmer and his party had partly succeeded in doing away with it.

All parts of the church were more or less adorned with imagery and pictures on walls, in windows, or on furniture. None had been ordered[2] to be taken away except such as had been superstitiously abused, or which were representations of "feigned miracles." From glass even these had been very imperfectly removed, for if taken away their places had to be filled with new glass, which cost money; and *Reformation*, though it found willing agents where plunder was to be got, moved slowly when it had to be paid for. Thus it happens that of the painted glass which has come down to our times, not a little takes the form of "monuments of feigned miracles." At York they remain by scores, and perhaps more remarkably the miracles of "Thomas Becket ye Trayter" still shine in the windows of Canterbury Cathedral.

Besides pictures, inscriptions of various sorts were painted on the walls or hung up on *tables*, or introduced in various ways into the decoration of the church and its furniture. The following may serve as an example of an edifying inscription of the early part of the sixteenth century. It is cut along the rail of the rood screen at Campsal Church, near Doncaster:—

"Let fal downe thyn ne & lift up thy hart
Behald thy maker on yond cros al to tor
Remembir his wondis that for the did smart
Gotyn without syn and on a virgin bor
Al his hed percid with a crown of thorne
Alas man thy hart oght to brast in too
Bewar of the dwyl whan he blawis his hor
And prai thy gode aungel convey the "

there the carver got to the end of his space, and so he

[1] White was much used as a Lenten colour. Inventories often mention white vestments for Lent.

[2] There is indeed a letter from Cranmer to Bonner dated February 8th, 1548, in which he and the Privy Council order *all* images to be taken away; but the fact that many remain to this day in spite of the large numbers which were destroyed in the seventeenth century shews that the order can not have been generally obeyed.

omitted the last word whatever it may have been. Inscriptions became more common a few years later, when they were a good deal used for controversial purposes, but as early as 1488 we find the ten commandments set up with "dyvers good prayers" at St. Christopher at Stock.

A short enumeration will suffice for the rest of the church goods. In the steeple were one or more bells, rarely, I think, fewer than two, and the richer churches had what we should now call peals, but though *tuneable* they appear not to have been rung in peals till about the end of the sixteenth century. One bell often hung apart from the rest was the *Sauncе* or *Sanctus* bell, which still continued in use, but by the injunctions of 1547 was diverted from its original purpose of marking the beginning of the canon of the parish Mass, and made to give notice of the sermon when there was one. Clocks were in some steeples, and in some musical chimes. It is curious that many ancient ringing customs have continued to our time in spite of the efforts which were made to put them down. In a very large number of old parish churches the *Angelus* bell still sounds morning and evening,[1] and in many cases a bell is rung at the end of morning service on Sundays, which is, I believe, the *Knowling of Aves*, specially forbidden in Cromwell's injunctions of 1536.

Each church had banners for Rogation and other processions. These banners bore sometimes figures of saints or other ecclesiastical devices, and sometimes were banners of arms.[2] The great procession of the year was that on *Corpus Christi* day, when the Blessed Sacrament enclosed in a monstrance or pyx with a transparent front was carried about, as on the continent at the present day, with such state as the parish or town could afford. In towns where there were several parishes it seems to have

[1] The evening *Angelus* bell is the same as the curfew, it being customary to recite the angelic salutation at the sounding of the curfew. The morning bell was introduced later. There appears not to have been a regular custom of ringing at midday in England, but the Knowling of Aves mentioned above was something very like it. There are a few churches in which a bell is rung daily at midday. It is at Royston, and, I think, at Arksey, both in Yorkshire.

[2] The custom which now exists in many places, especially in the south of England, of displaying a flag on the top of the steeple on feasts, appears at Sandwich in the fifteenth century. In the accounts of St. Mary's Church, printed in Boys's *History of Sandwich* (p. 364), we find "for a baner for ye stepell ayenst our dedycacion day xiij*d* ob.,' and there are other charges for the hoisting gear.

been usual for them all to join for this procession, and sometimes the pyx, instead of being carried in the hands of a priest, was mounted on a large shrine carried by several men. Above it was borne a canopy on four staves,[1] and round it many torches, some supplied by the churches and gilds and others by the private devotion of the people. The popularity of the pageants which in some places accompanied the procession caused it to be kept up till long into the reign of Elizabeth. But it is probable that its connection with the B. Sacrament ceased generally in 1547 and 1548.

When the priest took the Sacrament to the sick he was accompanied by clerks, who carried a cross, bell, and light. The Sacrament itself was enclosed in a pyx, and with it was taken a cup in which the priest dipped his fingers after giving the communion.[2] The chrismatory was generally a little box of metal containing three little bottles for the three oils, which seem generally to have been kept together.

For use at funerals, every church had a cross, a bier, and a handbell, the last being a good sized bell, which was rung before the corpse as it was being carried to the church.[3] It was also used for "crying" *obits* about the parish, and asking for prayers for the deceased. Some churches had what was called the common coffin, which was used to carry bodies to the church, the most general custom being to bury without coffin. And they had palls and torches for funerals, for the use of which a charge was made according to the quality of the pall and the "waste" of the torches.

At weddings it was the custom to hold a large square cloth of silk or other material, called the *care cloth*, over the heads of the bride and bridegroom whilst they received the benediction, and it was kept for that use amongst the

[1] These staves had sometimes little bells like sackering bells hung to them. The canopy carried over the head of the sovereign in the coronation procession still has bells which probably are a tradition from a time when the canopy used at coronations belonged to the church, and was also used in ecclesiastical processions.

[2] It appears from an inventory of the same St. Mary's, Sandwich (Boys, p. 374) that this cup was made some way to fit on to the pyx for convenience of carrying —"a cowpe of sylver and gylt for the Sacrament with a lytill cuppe there yn gylt to give the sike body drynke there of."

[3] Its use is still kept up in the University of Oxford.

church goods. At St. Margaret's, Westminster, we find also a crown or circlet for brides, which was called a *past*, and appears to have been a thing of some value.

I need not describe the vestments of the clergy, they were the same as had been in use for centuries before, and as are now in many of our churches. What was said just now about the colours of the altar vestments applies also to those of the clergy.

The actual fabrics of many old churches remain to us, some of them in a state of completeness which is wonderful, after all they have gone through, but to understand them properly we must know not only what remains, but what is gone from them. I have endeavoured to give a sketch of their old state, which, though not complete in all details, may help to give some idea of it, and I have only to add, in conclusion, that the year 1548 coincides, in its last eleven months, with the second year of King Edward VI, and that the first month of 1549 brought no changes either to the churches or the services.